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LETTER DATED 7 AUGUST 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The National Islamic Front (NIF) Government of the Sudan is, as usual, accusing Eritrea (see S/1998/708) of the military operations of Sudanese opposition forces inside Sudan that are fighting against it. It is, as it has in the past, trying to hide its own internal crisis and the pressures it is facing from opposition forces of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army and other forces in the National Democratic Alliance of the Sudan.

It is ironic that the NIF Government of the Sudan, which is a proven political pariah and an instrument of regional and international terrorism and destabilization, is accusing Eritrea of creating regional instability. Its opportunistic accusation now is perhaps timed and concocted in collusion with other forces of aggression in the region in a move to forge an unholy alliance against Eritrea.

We would like to reiterate what we have stated in the past: that the NIF Government of the Sudan has created and continued to arm and infiltrate into Eritrea an assortment of terrorist elements - members of the so-called Islamic jihad. Eritrea stands ready to defend its sovereignty from these or any future Sudanese attacks, and warns the NIF Government from embarking on adventurous dreams against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Eritrea.

Instead of lamely accusing Eritrea or other Governments in the region of the military operations of Sudanese opposition movements whose existence and operations are widely known, the Sudanese Government would be well-advised to head to the peace proposals of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development to solve the internal political problems in the country. Such proposals are supported by the international community as well.

I attach an article from an independent Saudi newspaper where the Sudanese opposition organization, the National Democratic Alliance, claimed in a press statement the operations mentioned in the Sudanese Foreign Minister's letter as its own (see annex). Needless to say, Eritrea categorically denies the baseless and sinister accusations of the Foreign Minister of the Sudan.

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

Annex

[Original: Arabic]

Article published in Al-Hayat, 4 August 1998

The Sudanese opposition confirms its control of areas along the border with Eritrea

The Sudan Alliance Forces (the opposition in the north) have announced that, the day before yesterday (Sunday), they launched an attack on the area of Al-Laffah (in Kassala province) on the border between the Sudan and Eritrea, overran the command post of the central sector and liberated the area completely.

In a communiqué issued yesterday, a copy of which was received by Al-Hayat in London, the Sudan Alliance Forces added that they "continued their advance to the village of Al-Jirah 12 kilometres south-east of the city of Kassala".

According to the communiqué, eight members of the Sudan Alliance Forces were killed and a number wounded. It also stated that the militias of the Islamic Front (the Sudanese Army) had lost 24 men and that 5 others had been captured.

The communiqué said that Sudanese Antonov aircraft responded to the attack by indiscriminate bombing near Al-Laffah, killing four civilians, but affirmed that the Alliance Forces were "now fully in control of the area and carrying out searches in forward positions from which the militias of the regime had fled".

The communiqué, which was signed by the spokesman for the Sudan Alliance Forces, Fathi Abd Al-Ghaziz, listed artillery and missile weapons, stating that the opposition had captured them during its attack.

The Sudanese Army announced a few days ago that it had repulsed an attack on the border with Eritrea in which Eritrean forces had participated alongside the Sudanese opposition. It claimed that the attack, which had been launched on four fronts, had been contained after heavy fighting.

The day before yesterday, the Sudan made a complaint to the Security Council about Eritrea, in which it accused Eritrea of having shelled a number of Sudanese border villages from inside its territory (Hafarat, Awad, Abu Alga, Galasa) in preparation for an attack on them in which Sudanese opposition forces took part.

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, Mr. Mustafa Osman, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, expressed the hope that the Council would take steps to prevent Eritrea from continuing "its openly hostile policies towards the Sudan".

However, officials of the Sudanese opposition, in communiqués issued by the joint military command of the National Democratic Alliance, claimed

responsibility for the attack which had targeted areas near the strategic city of Kassala. They also said that Khartoum routinely attributed to Eritrea military operations carried out by the opposition "in order to mislead public opinion and discredit the opposition forces". From its radio station in Asmara the opposition broadcast reports from the areas of operations and voice messages from captured members of the Government forces to their families and relatives in the Sudan.